

EQUALING THE BEST

Student Financial Assistance's mission is to help put America through school, and we've been doing it well. Since 1994, we have made more than 70 million loans and grants, and, in 1998 alone, invested 46 billion dollars in America's future. But growing workload has naturally driven taxpayer costs up, and the systems and the business processes that were built one at a time as loan and grant programs were authorized no longer work well together. Also in the last decade, private sector businesses have raised the bar on customer service. The same customers we serve are used to fast, convenient, tailored service in everything from on-line banking to pizza delivery. They gauge the quality of our service by what they get from the best in business.

Last year, Congress and the Administration agreed to give us an unprecedented opportunity to prove we can equal the best in business. They made SFA the government's first Performance Based Organization, giving us some leeway from federal procurement and personnel regulations in exchange for better performance.

This document is SFA's first five-year performance plan. It is our commitment to use the freedom of the PBO to make specific, measurable improvements in service, efficiency, and system integration. It is a contract with Secretary Riley, whose leadership and support are essential — with the Congress, who gave us this chance to excel — and with the American people, who rightly expect the best.